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CURRENT LITERATURE.

BOOK REVIEWS.

Plant Life.¹

THIS is the suggestive title of a new text-book of elementary botany, for its standpoint is function rather than structure. There can be no question as to the usefulness of the book, and as to its value as a contribution to our botanical texts. The style is clear and simple; the presentation is very logical; and many things are said which needed to be said. Teachers apart from the universities are in constant danger of holding to abandoned views, and a book is needed now and then to bring a rapidly developing subject up to date.

The book before us has done this service admirably, and its four parts present a clear elementary statement of present views of the vegetative body, physiology, reproduction, and ecology. This division of the subject enables the author to present these great subjects continuously, without breaking them up into fragments, and the comparative view thus becomes very prominent.

While all the parts are fresh, those which deal with physiology and ecology are especially noteworthy. The facts of physiology are accumulating and the views are shifting so rapidly that an elementary statement was needed, and it would be hard to find a completer outline in forty-six pages than is found in this book. The ecological view of plants is new in elementary instruction, to which it is especially adapted, and it is to be hoped that this modest beginning is but a promise of the time when it will dominate all of our texts for elementary instruction.

Only less commendable is the comparative and separate presentation of vegetative and sexual reproduction, which are in great danger of being confused in elementary instruction. In this part it was necessary to adopt some consistent terminology. How successful the author's suggestions will prove remains to be seen; they certainly could not be simpler.

Five appendices give information as to laboratory study, collecting and preserving material, apparatus and reagents, reference books, and an outline of classification.

¹ BARNES, CHARLES REID.—Plant life, considered with special reference to form and function. Pp. x + 428, with frontispiece and 415 figures. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$1.12.

However admirable the book may be as a general statement of the essential facts of botany, it will suggest criticisms from the standpoint of teaching. The most important of these the author has forestalled by stating that "this is not a book to be recited." In the text the same plant is discussed several times under different headings, a method that would not commend itself either for recitation or for laboratory work, but in the directions for laboratory work all the essential structures are called for while each plant is in hand. It is very evident, therefore, that the intelligent teacher is to use the book for assigned readings suitable to the material under examination in the laboratory and supplementary to it. It is hard for some teachers to get away from the idea of the recitation of consecutive pages.

Another criticism will be that the book is better designed for schools as they ought to be, than for schools as they are. The author practically confesses that he is writing for a somewhat ideal condition, and probably he is; certainly for a condition less realized in the east than in the west, where elementary instruction in science is so much further advanced. However, it is a matter of doubt to the reviewer whether any but the exceptional secondary schools will ever be able to do completely such morphological work as this book calls for; and also whether it is the most desirable work for them, handicapped as they are by lack of equipment, time, and age. First impressions must be correct, but it may not be necessary to include at first recondite things even if they are essential. There cannot be too much of ecology and physiology in elementary work, but it has seemed to the reviewer that recondite morphological structures are in danger of being pressed too far with elementary students.—J. M. C.

The Illustrated Flora.²

WITH the appearance of the third volume this important work is complete, and the authors should be congratulated upon its prompt publication, the first volume having appeared in 1896. Volume one was reviewed in the *GAZETTE* 22:269. 1896, volume two in 24:120. 1897, and little need be added in reference to the present volume, which contains the great sympetalous families. Use of the work has proved its adaptation to the needs of those who wish to determine plants, and it should certainly find a place in the library of all interested in taxonomy. When it is remembered that 4162 species are described and illustrated, representing 177 families and 1103 genera, it is surprising that the illustrations are so well done. The present volume, in an appendix, adds the descriptions and illustrations of eighty-one

²BRITTON, NATHANIEL LORD, and BROWN, ADDISON.—An illustrated flora of the Northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. In three volumes. Vol. III. Apocynaceæ to Compositæ. 8vo. pp. xiv + 588, fully illustrated. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$3.00.